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AUTHOR	Ferguson, Dianne L.; Kozleski, Elizabeth B.; Smith, Anne
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ABSTRACT

This report presents a systemic change framework for creating inclusive urban schools. It explains that if a key feature of reform focuses on multicultural education as a fundamental social and educational transformation, then opportunities for all students to achieve educational equity will be realized in U.S. schools. The first section of the report explains the importance of transforming schools to provide high quality education for all students, noting that transformed schools result in unified educational systems. The second section presents the systemic change framework, which includes four interconnected levels: student effort (student learning); professional effort (group practice and professional development, learning standards, learning assessment, family participation in teaching and learning, and teaching design and practices); school organization effort (physical environment and facilities, culture of change and improvement, structure and use of time, resource development and allocation, close school-community relationships, and governance and leadership); and district effort(district-community partnership, resources development and allocation, culture of renewal and improvement, organizational support, inquiry on schools and schooling, student services, and systemic infrastructure and organizational support). (Contains 104 references.) (SM)

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Authors
Dianne L. Ferguson
University of Oregon

Elizabeth B. Kozleski
University of Colorado at Denver

Anne Smith
U.S. Department of Education,
Office of Special Education Programs

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The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education, funds the National Institute for Urban School Improvement to facilitate the unification of current general and special education reform efforts as these are implemented in the nation's urban school districts. The National Institute's creation reflects OSEP's long-standing commitment to improving educational outcomes for all children, specifically those with disabilities, in communities challenged and enriched by the urban experience.

August 2001

On . . .

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Authors

Dianne L. Ferguson
University of Oregon

Elizabeth B. Kozleski
University of Colorado at Denver

Anne Smith
U.S. Department of Education,
Office of Special Education Programs

Introduction

We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us (Edmonds, 1979).

Schools are changing across the United States as educators, politicians, parents, families, and communities embark on a new century. An emerging global economy, ongoing demographic shifts, changes in both what "counts" as "knowledge" and who determines what "knowledge" is valued, and advances in technology as well as the skills and abilities demanded by the businesses and industries of the future all combine to render much of what schools have been obsolete (Spring, 2000). Further complicating this picture are the political dimensions of school reform in which the issues of school for what purpose, for whom, and for whose purpose continue to be debated (Asuno, Clark, Read, & McGree, 1994). For some, the debate remains one of equity in the pursuit of excellence in education for all children (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Falk, 1995; Freire, 2000). For others, the debate centers on the preparation of a competitive labor force and service industry as well as the social and economic stratification that implies (Gagnon, 1995). These debates permeate current discussions on teacher preparation, quality, and practice as well as equity in school finance and resource allocation, standards and accountability, school safety, and curricula. The extent to which the professional education community embraces and opens itself to dialogue and partnership with families and communities is another important dimension of the discourse on equity and access to excellence (Haynes & Comer, 1996; Ferguson & Ferguson, 1992). These dimensions of the discussion also hold the promise for the transformation of American schools from a 20th century educational system dominated by a narrow cultural perspective to one that reflects and values the multicultural nation that the United States has become (Banks, 2001; Nieto, 1996). Nowhere is the need for this broadening of cultural perspective more apparent than in the hallways and classrooms of our nation's urban schools (Fine, 1994).

The very nature of our system for funding schools has disadvantaged urban school systems since the Great Depression (Anyon, 2001). Consider that the Government Accounting Office reports that 80 percent of our nation's urban schools are funded at a lower rate than their suburban counterparts, in spite of the recent influx of state funds to shore up failing urban systems. The lack of equitable funding over an extended period of time has led to increased class sizes, lack of sufficient books and materials, shortages of certified teachers, and the deterioration of school buildings (Kozol, 1991). The magnitude of these problems should be of grave concern given the fact that urban schools comprise 4 percent of American school districts that serve more than 44 percent of our nation's students (Federal Register, 1997).

It is particularly in urban schools where resources are spread thinly that the problems of the overrepresentation of students of color and English Language Learners in special education is visible (Fusarelli, 1999). For instance, students of African American descent comprise about 16.3 percent of the school-age population but are more than 31 percent of the students classified as having mild mental retardation and 23.7 percent of the students classified as severely emotionally disturbed, while Latino students are over represented in the categories of learning disabilities and speech and language impaired (Heward & Cavanaugh, 2001). Researchers suggest that patterns of over representation are a result of the narrow cultural preference for particular modes of communication, cognitive schemas, affect, behavior, and knowledge (Artiles, Trent, Hoffman-Kipp, & Lopez-Torres, 2000; Hilliard, 1992).

Proponents of inclusive education argue that the basic tenets of special education that have led to separate programs and services promote and support the over representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education because they permit the exclusion of those students from general education classrooms (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Ewing, 1995; Patton, 1998; Pugach & Seidl, 1995). Further, the inclusive education movement has focused on the poor outcomes that students in special education have achieved as a result of their limited access to the general education curriculum (Ferguson, 1995; Berres, Ferguson, Knoblock, & Woods, 1996; National Association of State Boards of Education, 1990; Sailor & Skirtic, 1995; Skirtic, 1995; Tetler, 1995). To expand this conversation beyond the special education community, practitioners, families, and researchers must engage in a conversation that includes multicultural perspectives on inclusion and disproportionality (Artiles, 1998). If these often disconnected conversations can be joined, they will help to create a coherent vision for transforming the current educational system so that the social and educational inequities that currently exist for students of differing abilities, ethnicities, religions, experiences, and wealth are no longer present.

> All change in urban schools must address differences in culture, gender, language, ability, class and ethnicity.

All change in urban schools must address differences in culture, gender, language, ability, class, and ethnicity (Delpit, 1995). As James Banks (2001) recommends, schools need a true multicultural value system that encompasses simultaneously a concept, a process, and a reform agenda. Multicultural education is

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based on the notion that all students must have equal access, and it acknowledges that, in our current school system, some students are advantaged by their socio-cultural and economic status, ethnicity, and gender (Nieto, 1996). In a true multi-cultural education system, the practices and climate of schools that convey privilege associated with class, gender, language, ability, ethnicity, and culture are no longer present (Banks, 2001).

> ***Our nation cannot afford any longer to have disposable children. No longer can systems and policies be built on practices that restrict and restrain; that categorize and seek to find and separate the children and youth who do not "fit" our profiles of successful learners. We must acknowledge that such practices and beliefs have actually done harm to children, disproportionately limiting and constraining the opportunities for children in poverty, children of color, children with disabilities, and children with cultural and language differences (Draper, 1999).***

The challenge is great, but educators throughout our nation and other nations are actively engaging the opportunity to transform education and how we go about the work of teaching and learning in our schools. Proposed changes abound, addressing all aspects of schools, students, and teachers. While there are many different ways to summarize these change agendas, the National Institute for Urban School Improvement believes they share at least these six key features:

1. Creating viable family, community, and school partnerships (Epstein, 1995; Ferguson & Ferguson, 1992; Haynes & Comer, 1996),
2. Establishing performance standards for students (McLaughlin, 1995; Darling-Hammond & Falk, 1997),
3. Establishing performance standards for multi-cultural teacher preparation and practice (Hollingsworth, 1994),
4. Aligning curricula and the established accountability system into a coherent multi-cultural framework,
5. Holding schools accountable for all students' performance results (Darling-Hammond, Ancess et al., 1995), and
6. Building capacity through an ongoing professional development system (Smylie, 1995).

Teachers, particularly in urban schools, must understand and value children's differing experiences based on culture, race, ethnicity, disability, economic background, and gender (Briscoe, 1991; Hollins, 1996; Lightfoot, 1983). Urban schools must draw on the strength of student diversity and use that diversity as an asset to foster creativity and leverage new interactions that support learning (Nieto, 1996). The voices of diverse students, parents, and communities, then, become integral to the educational process and may suggest changes in policy and practice that better support the education and learning of all students.

The opposite of this positive scenario is a bleak one: lack of cultural competence among educators and other service providers can have devastating consequences (Ogbu, 1978; Ogbu, 1995; Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986). It can lead to discriminatory identification and diagnosis, improper evaluation and placement, and inadequate or inappropriate services, especially to children of color, poverty, and limited English proficiency (Patton, 1998; Reynolds & Wang, 1993). James Comer (Ben-Avie, Haynes, & Joyner, 1999) discusses the ways that racism effects child development, and in turn, education. Comer argues that teachers must have an opportunity to learn ways in which their behavior can either facilitate or interfere with child development, and that early childhood educators in particular must be prepared to teach children facing race-based obstacles to success. Comer also points out the importance of creating a positive school climate to promote children's development and of addressing children's social and emotional needs.

Observing that racism is endemic and deeply ingrained in American life, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) have called for a "critical race theory" of education that acknowledges that our political and social systems are based on property rights rather than human rights. The relationship between ethnicity and poverty in this country present an opportunity for understanding how property rights have contributed to the increasing numbers of persons of color who lack access to high quality educational opportunities that are so closely related to higher paying jobs and economic power. This perspective on the social and political nature of education has led to an examination of the social and political issues that are replayed in many urban classrooms. According to Delpit (1988; 1995), many of the academic problems typically associated with children of color are actually the result of miscommunications, inability to deal with the imbalances of power in our society, and the complex dynamics of inequality in our public school system.

Multicultural education is a response to and an acknowledgment of the context in which learning occurs in our nation's public schools. By adopting a multicultural lens for teaching and learning, students and teachers alike increase their knowledge and appreciation of the rich and fluid nature of different cultures, and of differences and similarities within and among different cultures and individuals (Banks, 2001; Grossman, 1995a; Powell, McLaughlin, Savage, & Zehm, 2001). Multicultural education is not merely a set of skills and procedures learned at one point in time and applied over and over again. It is a process through which educators and other

service providers learn to interpret and adapt to their personal encounters with one another. Through multicultural education, teachers and students become culturally responsive and competent, creating new pathways for communication and knowledge sharing (Liston & Zeichner, 1996).

> Indeed, the National Institute takes the position that it is the embracing of inclusive practices and multiculturalism that will support educational success for ALL students.

If a key feature of reform focuses on multicultural education as a fundamental social and educational transformation, then we can be assured that the opportunities for ALL students to achieve educational equity will be realized in our nation's schools. Indeed, the National Institute takes the position that it is the embracing of inclusive practices and multiculturalism that will support educational success for ALL students.

Why Transform Schools?

Recognizing that there continues to be considerable and legitimate debate surrounding inclusive practices, there is considerable evidence that exclusionary and categorical service delivery models have poorly served students from diverse backgrounds (Artiles, 1998; Artiles & Trent, 1994; Patton, 1998). Traditional strategies for referring, screening, identifying, and placing students into specialized services and classrooms have resulted in:

1. An increase in negative stereotypes based on disability labels,
2. A lack of learning outcomes for students with disabilities that are comparable to their peers without special education labels (Pugach & Seidl, 1996),
3. Numbers of minority students in special education that cannot simply be explained by co-varying circumstances of poverty (Artiles & Trent, 1994),
4. Families and children who walk away from services (Harry, 1992), and
5. A focus of blame for failure on the student while virtually ignoring quality of teaching and learning, both before and after referral and placement in special education (Grossman, 1995a).

At the same time, general educators continue to struggle with an increasing diversity of students who challenge the common curriculum and ability-grouping practices long dominant throughout the educational system, whether because of cultural and language differences, differences in ability, or social and family differences (Nieto, 1999). Add to this increasing diversity the ongoing advancements in theories and practices of teaching and learning that are leading to a renewed focus on students' understanding and use of their learning rather than recall of facts or isolated skills (Brown & Campione, 1998).

Even more challenging, students must demonstrate their learning via application or performance. Such uses and performances may vary according to students' particular abilities, interests, and life purposes as well as the requirement of state testing (McLaughlin, 1995). How, then, do teachers respond to calls for higher standards of achievement and accommodation of the many differences children and youth bring to school? In the face of often conflicting messages and challenges, urban, as well as other school professionals, are also facing rapid erosion of financial support and public respect. Not only are they being asked to "do more with less," but they are also blamed as incompetent for not accomplishing such an impossible task.

At the same time, urban educators try to meet the new challenges of more diverse students and the renewed focus on learning results, they must also have the support of reconceptualized and redesigned opportunities for both initial preparation and ongoing professional development. No matter how willing a teacher might be to meet new challenges, developing the depth and breadth of capacity to do so well can only be accomplished through ongoing support for teacher learning and development that results in improved student learning and achievement (Smylie, 1995).

Educators are realizing that the efforts of renewal and reform that seemed adequate to resolve the educational problems of the past will simply not suffice. Doing better and more efficient schooling work, or changing existing procedures, rules, and requirements to accommodate new circumstances, will not quiet the need, or calls for changes as we begin the new millennium. Instead, educators now argue that schools must begin to engage in the activities that will change the "fundamental assumptions, practices, and relationships within the organization, and between the organization and the outside world, in ways that lead to improved student learning outcomes" (Elmore, 1996). Since many of these fundamental assumptions helped to create the very separateness between special and general education, it is just such fundamental changes that might realize the vision of inclusive schools.

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Changing any school is both a non-linear and bi-directional task (Fullan, 1994; 1997; Fullan & Miles, 1992). "Top-down" policy changes must be met by "bottom-up" changes in capacity, commitment, and coherence among teachers, students, and families if changes are to become more than superficial accommodations. At the same time, there is no single road map for achieving deeper change (Louis & Miles, 1990). Local events, resources, and personal dynamics combine to create for any particular school or district a unique choreography of change, characterized as much by stepping back as by stepping forward. Students, parents, teachers, and parents must become active co-constructors of new school communities, collaborating with one another, with students, and local community members (Berres, et al., 1996; Council of Administrators of Special Education, 1993; Cohen, 1995; Darling-Hammond, Ancess, et al., 1995; Ferguson, 1995).

The basic premise of inclusive school communities is that schools are about belonging, nurturing and educating all children regardless of their differences in culture, gender, language, ability, class and ethnicity.

Thus, any school reform effort must focus on assuring that all students are considered as changes are made in instructional delivery, curriculum, student groupings, and school organization (Berres & Knoblock, et al., 1996). This task is daunting since there are many tensions within education communities including special education (Sarason, 1990). While the ongoing reform discussion deals with many different dimensions of the issues, a common ground is emerging. Recent revisions of federal legislation include new language that focuses on "access to the general education curriculum" (United States Department of Education, 1996). These revisions, coupled with initiatives in other countries around the world, suggests that the impetus to ensure that students with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers is receiving greater and greater validation both within and outside the special education community (O'Hanlon, 1995).

Inclusive, multicultural urban schools embody the concepts of community, diversity, and collaboration (Sailor & Skrtic, 1995). The basic premise of inclusive school communities is that schools are about belonging, nurturing, and educating all children regardless of their differences in culture, gender, language, ability, class, and ethnicity (Saldana & Waxman, 1997). The challenge in inclusive, multicultural school communities is to provide a diverse student body with access to these outcomes and to ensure to the maximum extent possible that all students have the opportunities to maximize their quality of life (Spring, 2000).

The National Institute of Urban School Improvement's efforts are demonstrating how urban school improvement and renewal activities can help schools to more successfully meet the educational needs of students from diverse backgrounds and their families. Of course, it is in the details of translating the vision to reality that the complexity of this transformation is revealed.

Transformed Schools = Unified Systems

A unified educational system is based on the premise that each student represents a unique combination of abilities and educational needs and deserves individual assistance at various times throughout the schooling cycle in order to achieve important outcomes. Key to this approach are schools that are organized around learning supports, not programs and services. Accountability in this approach is based on the use of the same effectiveness indicators for all students—across culture, gender, language, ability, socio-economic background, religion, and ethnicity— and assurance that all students are appropriately and effectively educated as defined by agreed upon standards.

In a successful, unified system, educators believe not only that all students can learn, but also that they have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to teach all students. As a result, the lines between general education, special education, Title I, bilingual education, migrant education, vocational education, compensatory education, and other categorical programs become blurred and eventually disappear. Previously separate programs for specific groups of students come together to form a new educational system (Conley, 1991). Such a school system anchors its work in curriculum content, students' performance, and learning assessment strategies, all of which reflect learning outcomes that are valued by local communities and families and informed by national and state standards, curriculum frameworks, and assessment strategies (Fine, 1994).

In a successful, unified system, educators believe not only that all students can learn, but also that they have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to teach all students.

Achieving Transformed, Unified Systems

The task is complex and it is often made more complex by the sheer number of demands for change that districts, schools, and teachers must address at one time. Change tasks are often different "sizes." Some can be understood and mastered in a relatively short time, such as changing to a block scheduling approach in an individual building. Many others require a sustained effort to understand and master, in part because they seek to change more fundamental ways of thinking and working in schools (Evans,

1996). Consider the complexity of redefining the way that practitioners work together to support each other's expertise and meet the needs of diverse learners.

> The real challenge of school renewal is changing old assumptions and practices to reinvent schools rather than simply making additions or corrections to existing practice.

To do this requires bringing together all the practitioners within a building and to openly examine how to best organize time and people to deliver services and supports to students (Lambert, 1998). The real challenge of school renewal is changing old assumptions and practices to reinvent schools rather than simply making additions or corrections to existing practice (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000). Task overload and competing demands can turn important and fundamental changes into small, quick fixes that ultimately change little more than what things are called. One way to handle the number and variety of changes required to engage key stakeholders in transforming schools is to have a way to organize efforts in meaningful ways. In response to the complex and sometimes daunting tasks of improving schools, the National Institute has developed a tool to help frame and organize the necessary discourse and the complex and interrelated dimensions involved with transforming schools (Bellamy, 1994; Ferguson & Kozleski, 1999).

The Systemic Change Framework

Systemic reform is the process of identifying the components of a complex system and making strategic choices about levels of change that have a high probability of improving critical outcomes (Banathy, 1996). Using a systemic framework to approach the reform of the educational system helps us to remember that interventions that are seemingly innocuous at one level may produce seismic results at another level (Banathy, 1996). System characteristics are often invisible to the people involved in them, yet they have a life and dynamic of their own (Bateson, 1972). As a reform is underway, there are elements that both reinforce and balance change efforts. So, for every initiative that pushes the system in one direction, another initiative may bubble up to push the system in the opposite direction. This principle helps to explain why large and complex urban systems are so difficult to change. Indeed, systems try to maintain equilibrium in order to sustain what has already been created. These principles from systems theory suggest that change in a complex social and political system like education must be made at multiple levels, from national organizations and government to individual schools, in order to create the intended results.

Achieving an inclusive, multicultural school system requires a way to describe the work of districts, schools, and people so that change efforts can be organized into meaningful and effective elements. Intuitively, we know that urban schools have many rich and unique contextual features. In order to guide the change effort so that urban schools are inclusive for all learners, we must provide a framework that encourages educators, community, and family members to discuss their beliefs about schools, students and learning, various student outcomes, and multiple family goals but still moves schools toward an inclusive approach to each and every student.

If districts and schools were organized around the capacity to change, their systems would look very different than the traditional district and school bureaucracies that have been organized for efficiency and stability (Louis & Miles, 1990). In a change-oriented organization, information is made available "just in time" so practitioners can adjust and improve based on valid information. It is this premise that practitioners, schools, and districts must be unified, change oriented, and information rich that led to the development of the Systemic Change Framework (Bellamy, 1994; Ferguson & Kozleski 1999). The National Institute's Systemic Change Framework helps to structure and network change efforts at the district, school, and classroom levels.

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The Systemic Change Framework (see Figure 1) visually represents the varying levels of effort that combine to effect student achievement and learning. The four levels of the Framework are interconnected, as represented by the permeable lines that delineate levels and efforts. What occurs at the district level affects the school level, which in turn affects student learning. Of course all these local levels are constantly affected by the agendas, policies, and practices that emerge from state educational organizations and national governmental activities. The district generally mediates these state and national efforts as they are routed to schools and classrooms. Thus, we have designed the Framework for use at the local level and emphasize the relationships that most directly affect students' learning and effort. When the efforts at the three outer levels of the Framework are maximized or in sync with one another, then the result is a healthy system that can better support student learning.

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SYSTEMIC CHANGE FRAMEWORK

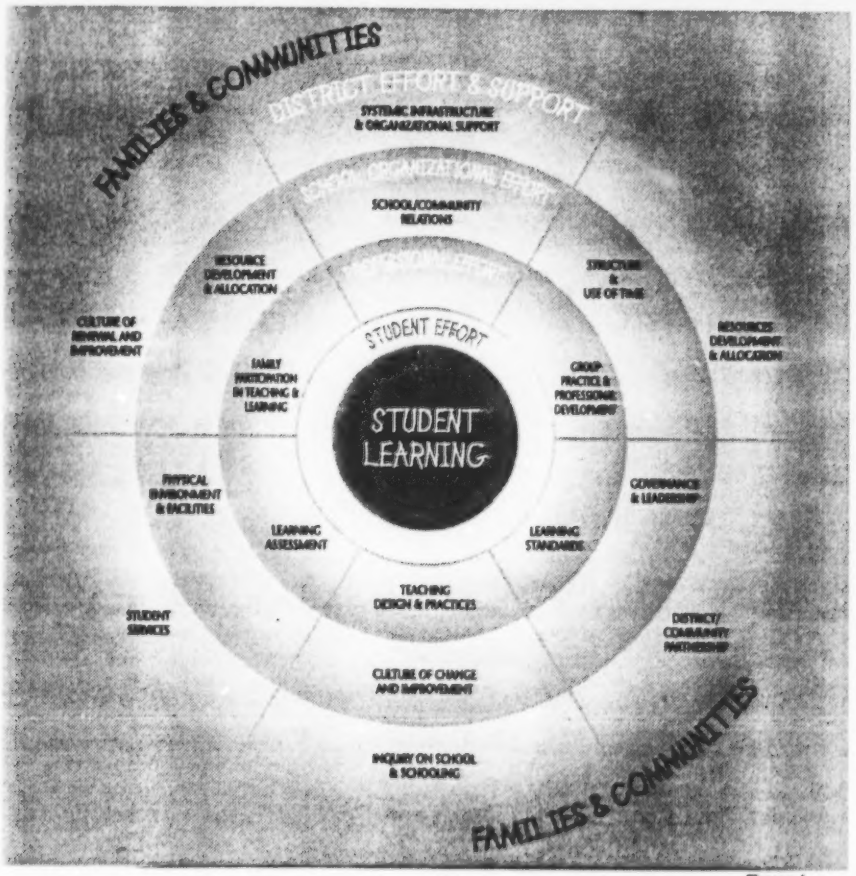

Figure 1

Student Effort

The Framework begins with student learning since student learning is the heart of all school effort. Learning is defined broadly to include self, social, career, and academic knowledge and competence. Learning is a central, defining function of each human being. How infants, children, youth, and adults learn is predicated on the approaches that they use to process, interpret, and make meaning of the world around them in light of their own cultural perspectives and norms (Ogbu, 1995). The learning process is developmental since information processing, interpreting, and meaning making become more sophisticated as children develop tools for learning. Infants use their senses to gather, process, and predict events. Toddlers' language accelerates their access to learning because linguistic symbols can be used to store, retrieve, and share sensory experiences. Social interactions and the collaborative play of preschoolers provide other key ingredients for learning since socially constructed knowledge expands the potential for knowledge acquisition. As children grow into adolescents and adults, their learning tools multiply. Utility, functionality, and context are at the heart of learning rather than a psychological construct of intelligence. While learning is developmental, functional, and socially constructed, it also requires effort. Effort focuses and propels learning. Knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are outside of any one person's immediate frame of reference require effort to learn. In order for learning to occur,

Learning is a central, defining function of each human being.

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students must act or expend effort. Therefore, the inner circles of the Framework represent both student learning and effort.

While student learning is the school's most important outcome, student learning results from individual and group effort that is only partially accounted for by factors that urban schools and districts can influence (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). As a result, both must focus attention on providing those conditions, opportunities, tasks, role models, relationships, and information that support and nurture student learning. To do this requires thoughtful, caring, and reflective practice in classrooms that is supported by building-wide systems for professional development and resource stewardship. The transformation and renewal work of schools becomes more manageable by grouping elements together to focus efforts. The Framework provides a shared reference point for diverse members of the school community to support collaborative effort in pursuit of common interests. Further, since these elements describe the work of teaching students with differences in culture, gender, language, ability, class, and ethnicity, schools can integrate inclusive, multicultural educational practices with other reform goals to form a coherent approach to renew and transform educational processes.

While learning is developmental, functional and socially constructed, it also requires effort.

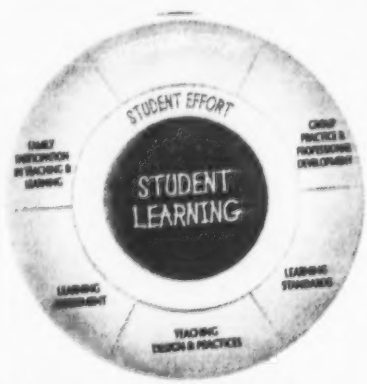
Professional Effort

While student learning is the urban school's most important outcome, measures of learning are insufficient to guide school improvement efforts since learning results from individual student effort that is only partially accounted for by school controlled factors (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). How learning environments get established and maintained rests on the skills and creativity of teachers and other practitioners (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). The Systemic Change Framework identifies five core features of this learning environment: (1) *Learning Standards*, (2) *Learning Assessment*, (3) *Teaching Design and Practices*, (4) *Group Practice and Professional Development*, and (5) *Family Participation in Teaching and Learning*. Where these elements are well designed and implemented, students thrive and their effort to learn is optimized.

Similarly, practitioners thrive and are better able to innovate and support student effort and outcomes when their organization supports and encourages their creativity and professionalism. Organizational support for teacher learning and innovation must also be supported by initial educator preparation and ongoing professional development opportunities that enable educators to acquire and build accomplished capacity to address the five core features of professional effort.

Practitioners thrive and are better able to innovate and support student effort and outcomes when their organization supports and encourages their creativity and professionalism.

Each of the professional effort elements is a critical feature of the learning environment. For instance, learning standards and learning assessment are essential for identifying what must be taught. *Learning assessment* helps teachers understand the knowledge and skills of each student while defining goals for learning. Assessment represents a complex set of concepts and activities since it occurs both to inform instruction and to measure the outcomes of the same event. How assessment occurs and the degree of authenticity with which it is conducted is its own field of study. *Learning standards* are critical to the learning environment and support student effort in providing students with the knowledge of "what it is we need to know and be able to do" in this classroom and school. Assessment practices need to be complemented by teaching design and practices that also honor and address each student's particular learning. Thematic, integrated curriculum units that flexibly accommodate students' multiple intelligences, incorporate cooperative learning practices, and offer flexible tasks and products all provide strategies for planning and teaching in inclusive ways (Gardner, 1999).



As of 1992, 50 of the largest 99 school districts in the US had over a 50 percent enrollment of "minority" students (Ballou, 1996). By 1995, 35 percent of all students enrolled in grades 1-12 in public

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Learning standards and assessment are essential for identifying what must be taught

schools were considered to be part of a "minority" group, an increase of 11 percent from 1976. At the same time that the number of students of color, students who speak languages other than English, and students who live in poverty has increased, the nation's teachers have become more monolithic, monocultural, and monolingual: the percentages of white teachers grew from 88 percent in 1971 to 90.7 percent in 1996, while the number of African American teachers decreased from 8.1 percent to 7.3 percent .

Many of these teachers tend to view diversity of student backgrounds as a problem rather than as a resource that enriches teaching and learning. Such attitudes manifest themselves in low expectations that then get expressed in watered down and fragmented curriculum for students of diverse race, culture, and socio-economic backgrounds (Nieto, 1992; Oakes, 1985). Because many teachers understand student diversity from a "cultural deficit" or a "cultural deprivation" (Jensen, 1969) perspective, they attribute urban students' low academic achievement to the students' lack of ability, culture, and motivation to learn (Banks, 2001; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Delpit, 1995). Students who have diverse racial, ethnic, and socio-cultural histories may also put a strain on urban teachers who are often from different backgrounds than their students. The problems that urban students bring to school may also overwhelm urban teachers, therefore, making it more difficult for them to successfully engage with pedagogical issues. Adding to urban students concerns, teachers seldom attribute low scores to teachers' performance in the classroom (Rego & Nieto, 2000), and, therefore, many educators continue to seek the single approach to "good teaching" that will improve all students' achievement (Haberman, 1991). Yet, these teachers must organize pedagogies that will engage and connect the classroom to the urban student's individual experiences.

The literature on effective and inclusive schools – whether urban, suburban, or rural – in addition to identifying specific educator practices, also highlights the need for collaboration among and between general and special educators.

The literature on effective and inclusive schools – whether urban, suburban, or rural – in addition to identifying specific educator practices, also highlights the need for collaboration among and between general and special educators. Indeed, group practice is the hallmark of inclusive schools. Educators must be able to communicate using the same language and collaborate across their traditional role and cultural boundaries. Given limited preparation for group practice during initial teacher education programs, the limited shared experiences across school professional roles, and the range of new skills that are required to teach an increasingly diverse group of students, school professionals need support, training, and coaching in order to implement high quality, inclusionary practices effectively. Yet, school professionals are caught in a double bind. With declining resource allocation for professional development and increasing teacher/student ratios, educators are too often being asked to change without support.

Helping urban schools meet the needs of more and more students and families requires not standardization of procedures, but a depth of repertoire that permits adaptations to be made in response to student differences and needs (Lareau & Shumar, 1996). This accommodation requires expertise in assessment, creating opportunities to practice emerging skills, providing assistance, feedback, and organizing classrooms to maximize time spent in learning. Special educators have used these skills for many years in settings with very low pupil-to-teacher ratios. General educators have skills in managing large groups of students, subject matter expertise, group assessment strategies, and the ability to provide multiple levels of instruction.

Indeed, group practice is the hallmark of inclusive schools.

Teaching multiculturally also requires skills and knowledge about language, literacy, and cultural experiences that are so well represented by teachers who come from bilingual, English as a Second Language and multicultural teacher preparation, or professional development backgrounds (Nieto, 1996). These teachers have a rich knowledge of how language development and literacy evolve within learning environments that support the experiences and abilities that students bring with them. Putting the knowledge base and skills of these varying traditions together will enhance the education for all learners and create a new "hybrid" educator that benefits from the best of all traditions.

One important aspect of group practice is the inclusion of parents and other family members. (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Harry, 1992). Urban schools need families not only to support school efforts outside of school, but more importantly, to contribute to the ongoing mission and operations of the school (Fine, 1994). For example, parent's often are the best source of learning data; when their children use their learning at home and

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around the neighborhood, teachers can be more assured about the meaningfulness and durability of what their students have learned. Teachers and school administrators are beginning to make their schools accessible to family and community members in new and innovative ways that extend far beyond the cupcake-bearing classroom parents and PTA members of the past. Family participation takes on new meaning in restructured inclusive schools.

Parents and community members now serve on building or instructional leadership teams. They contribute to the school's instruction, public relations, and ongoing operations by offering their talents and resources. Schools are also opening their doors after school so that family and community members can use the school building and resources to continue their own learning through adult courses, access to fitness activities, and another community meeting place. Finally, some comprehensive inclusive schools bring together a variety of other services and resources, providing "one-stop-shopping" for families whom need and use a range of community services (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000).

School Organizational Effort

While the core features of the learning environment are most directly linked to student performance, the school organization is most directly linked to professional effort. That is, teachers and

other school personnel are able to engage in sustained, thoughtful, continually improving, and reflective practice if the school organization creates a milieu or environment that supports professional practice (Beyer, 1996). In recent years, many urban school districts have implemented forms of school-based, shared decision-making in their efforts to restructure schools (Bondy, 1995). The traditional bureaucratic, rational, authoritative leadership approach has been challenged and, as a result, many of today's successful schools are based upon shared inquiry and decision-making. Such schools are moving towards a collective–as opposed to an individual–practice of governance, teaching, and learning. These collective practices describe the concept of learning organizations or communities (Joyce, Murphy, Showers, & Murphy, 1989). Six essential features of the school organization support professional effort: (1) *Governance and Leadership*, (2) *Culture of Change and Improvement*, (3) *Physical Environment and Facilities*, (4) *Structure and Use of Time*, (5) *Resource Development and Allocation*, and (6) *School/Community Relationships*.

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The school organization, staff, policies, structure, and resources are the school, as most directly experienced by teachers and other staff. By determining the staff's responsibilities, interactions with each other, and continued development, the organization influences the amount of effort that educators are able to focus on their work. Many urban schools lack the supports that are needed for teachers to make changes in their work. An important focus of the National Institute's support of school reform efforts has been to help schools organize leadership teams that include school professionals, school board members, family members, students, and administrators.

One way to help urban schools manage the complexity of change and improvement is to form and sustain leadership teams that represent the diversity of voices in a building. We find that leadership for change must reside within the collective vision of a learning community rather than within an individual such as a principal (Elmore, 1999-2000).

One way to help urban schools manage the complexity of change and improvement is to form and sustain leadership teams that represent the diversity of voices in a building.

Most of the conventional wisdom in school leadership research places great emphasis on the role of the principal. In our experience, reform and renewal built on individual leadership is difficult to sustain or to scale up because of the mobility of people in such roles. The challenges of changing leadership are even more critical in urban settings where all school personnel seem to move to new schools and districts at a higher rate than is typical in suburban or

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rural districts. Further, as Miller (1996) points out, where vision and drive rests with a leader, only about 25 percent of the community typically mobilizes to carry out the agenda. The work of urban school reform is too complex and must contend with so much inertia that leadership must be shared.

If you accept that the most challenging students require the combined expertise of many individuals including administrators, teachers, mental health personnel, community advocates, and students themselves, then it makes sense to create structures that bring this collective resource together. The use of building-level leadership teams for *governance and leadership* creates the opportunity for shared decision-making resulting in two important benefits for students with disabilities, as well as for many other students in urban schools who require additional learning supports at some time or another in their school careers. First, students benefit from the increased use of diverse instructional procedures in general education classrooms. Second, special educators and related service providers are involved in general education curriculum decisions and classroom instruction.

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A Building Leadership Team (BLT) orchestrates the work of families, school professionals, administrators, and students engaged in the school improvement process (Lambert, 1998). Sometimes these teams have other names, but regardless of the exact title, Building Leadership Teams work together to review practices that work, identify areas that may need improvement, and plan for progress, achievement, and risk. The synergy of team leadership facilitates rapid and sustained change. Leadership teams provide the needed context for shared decision-making and create a climate of continuous school improvement. These teams may already exist in buildings as site-based management teams, site councils, instructional leadership teams, accountability cadres, or school improvement teams. These teams are important facilitators of another feature of professional effort: *a culture of change and improvement.*

In a speech at an American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Richard Elmore (1996) highlighted the importance of ongoing public conversations in schools and among practitioners about how they intend to improve their practice. A school must provide the intellectual and emotional climate to support sustained improvement of practice. Teachers and other practitioners must use the information that students provide about their learning progress to inform curriculum and teaching decisions. The purposeful improvement of practice must be supported by collective dialogue about practice (Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles 1988; Lieberman 1994; Lieberman & Miller, 1991; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Such conversation is absent in many urban schools. But without a collective sense of responsibility for student learning, urban teachers are left to their own resources for making complex decisions about how to support learning for an increasingly diverse student population.

There are many urban schools where the staff and faculty understand the urgency to reinvent their roles and redefine their craft. Yet, the way that time is structured and used prevents the planning and collaborative work necessary to achieve sustained change (Louis & Miles, 1990). Without time during the work day to meet, discuss, and challenge one another's ideas and activities, it is difficult to imagine many educators achieving the quality of dialogue and inquiry that Elmore suggests is necessary for sustained, whole school improvement. Some schools have managed to create more time for professional interaction by thoughtful scheduling of physical education, the fine arts, and academic blocks of time, for example. Others reorganize the week in order to release students early one day each week. Still others are generating other creative ways to create time for group practice.

A school must provide the intellectual and emotional climate to support sustained improvement of practice.

Physical environment and facilities is another essential component of the urban educational experience. In addition to maintaining school buildings that meet contemporary fire and health standards, school buildings need to be architecturally accessible to all students. Further, students' learning preferences can be supported through the way that space and time are used in classrooms. Materials storage and access should fit the instructional goals and independence levels of the students. The noise, temperature, and paint color in a room can contribute to or distract from learning just as the sheer numbers of students in a space can enhance or detract from learning. Furniture and seating arrangements can also support or detract from learning. For instance, in kindergarten and first grade, the physical cues provided by carpet squares or chairs help students to monitor and regulate

By using space and equipment thoughtfully, school professionals can also reduce the amount of talking they do to manage the group and so increase the time students spend learning the explicit curriculum.

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their movement. Furniture can be an important asset in learning. If a child's feet cannot reach the floor, the child is much more likely to squirm, get out of seat often, or be distracted by the discomfort. Students with some kind of physical and mobility impairments also need their chairs and desks to be thoughtfully selected and placed in the room. By using space and equipment thoughtfully, school professionals can also reduce the amount of talking they do to manage the group and so increase the time students spend learning the explicit curriculum. In many urban schools, teachers, building administrators, and staff do not have access to choice in materials, desks, and chairs that their students use, so that organizing the physical layout of the class to match the kind of teaching and learning needed is difficult to imagine. Yet, this feature of school effort can make a significant difference in learning outcomes for students.

The reality is that many urban schools are in extremely poor condition. So much so, that in the fall of 1998, the District of Columbia Public Schools could not open several of their schools because they were unsafe to be in. The problems range from dilapidated and poorly maintained physical facilities to the need for careful monitoring of hallways and entrances and exits to prevent intruders and weapons from entering buildings. In some urban systems, the administration has made a concerted attempt to refurbish school buildings, insisting on ensuring that asbestos removal is completed, broken windows are repaired immediately, paint is available to keep the insides and outsides of buildings free of graffiti, and that the basic physical plant is kept in good repair. These efforts are critical and visible symbols that the system cares about and is responsive to its children and its teachers. The costs of maintaining older facilities, planning for ongoing renovation, and creating access to the Internet and other forms of digital communication are staggering in many of our nation's urban school systems. Yet, without significant investment in physical facilities, it will be difficult for schools, faculties, and their local community supporters to provide access to the same quality education that students in more affluent, suburban communities experience.

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Resource development and allocation are difficult to reapportion when most schools receive a fixed allocation of teachers with a very limited activities and/or supplies budget. Urban school face greater challenges than many other districts in this regard perhaps because of their size. Economies of scale simply provide no advantage to urban districts and, thus, size becomes perhaps the biggest challenge. Urban districts also suffer some lack of flexibility in managing fiscal resources both because of the source of some of the funding and unique problems such as the hiring and retention of teachers and substitute teachers. Yet, using these resources well can enhance the motivation and effort that teachers bring to their work.

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For instance, while the number of faculty and staff assigned to a building may be fixed, there can be fewer constraints imposed on how the staff is organized to teach. Some schools have rethought the traditional class approach where students are assigned to a teacher or set of teachers based on equalizing the number of students across teachers. Instead, some schools have begun to look at flexible class sizes based on team approaches. Thus, a team of teachers responsible for a particular curricular standard or subject can think about how they might increase and decrease class size based on the teaching activity and learning outcome. So, a lesson on sentence construction may require only one teacher with 40 students sharing 15 computers while feedback on a term paper may require more one-on-one or very small group discussions. If two teachers with 50 students between them organize as a team they may be able to accomplish both tasks well and with better outcomes for the students.

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In a transformed, inclusive urban school, then, learning and other educational supports are organized to meet the needs of all students rather than historical conventions or the way the rooms are arranged in the building. Creative reallocation of even limited resources and innovative re-organization of teachers into partnerships and teams offer ways to break old molds and create the flexibilities needed to focus on student learning and achievement. Previously separate "programs," like special education, Title I, or bilingual education, come together to form a new educational system that delivers necessary additional supports and instruction in the same spaces to diverse groups of students. The new system anchors both organizational and professional effort in student content, performance, and skill standards that are owned by local communities and families while informed by national and state standards, curriculum frameworks, and effective assessment strategies.

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Close *school/community relationships* are at the heart of successful, comprehensive, and inclusive urban schools. To educate all students successfully, accommodate the unique educational needs of each child, and welcome families participation in their children's education, the school must invite broad participation from families, local religious organizations, advocacy groups, local businesses, and government. Education is at the core of all vital communities. Given the challenges and risks faced by both schools and families in most urban communities, there is even greater urgency for forging and sustaining strong school – community linkages (Haynes & Comer, 1996). The sheer size of many urban challenges requires carefully orchestrated initiatives across community agencies, schools, and neighborhood organizations. Any one group working alone may fail to make much progress and some problems may remain unresolved, but working together often generates the shared vision, needed synergy, and practical strategies that can succeed in improving the conditions and outcomes for both students and their families and neighbors.

Close *school/community relationships* are at the heart of successful, comprehensive, and inclusive urban schools.

Parents, family, and community members also directly contribute to the work of schools. Parents and families bring an understanding of the broader community and social development needs and strengths of children to the learning environment that can inform school planning and influence curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Strong linkages with families can help school personnel more sensitively honor and incorporate different cultural and linguistic perspectives, values, and practices into the life and learning of the school community (Harry, 1992). One of the serious issues facing urban schools is the mismatch between the diversity profile of the students and that of the teachers. A disproportionate percentage of urban school personnel are white Americans while the student population reflects a much more diverse cultural and ethnic mix (Hilliard, 1994). Further, teacher preparation programs may not have adequately prepared urban teachers to understand and teach to such multicultural and diverse groups (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Hollins, 1996; Liston & Zeichner, 1996). Without close linkages with families, neighborhood organizations, and other community organizations like churches and grass roots advocacy groups, teachers have little opportunity to acquire this learning.

Strong linkages with families can help school personnel more sensitively honor and incorporate different cultural and linguistic perspectives, values, and practices into the life and learning of the school community.

Urban families also benefit directly from being meaningfully involved. Both Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) and its ATLAS Communities™ partner, the School Development Program (SDP) at Yale University, have documented many cases in which parent volunteers who had dropped out of school were motivated, encouraged, and supported to return to school (Comer, Ben-Avie, Haynes, & Joyner, 1999). Some obtained their high school equivalency diploma, and some continued on to college. Drawing upon the work of Epstein, Comer, and others, we know that parents can be involved in a great many ways: as teachers, learners, advocates, decision makers, volunteers, outreach workers, and ambassadors to the community-at-large (Harry, 1992; Haynes & Comer, 1996; Epstein, 1995). While the vast majority of school staff and parents are willing, even eager, to increase parental participation in the schools, often they don't know how to do so. It is especially important that parents from every socioeconomic, racial and ethnic, and cultural group be involved and empowered to participate and contribute meaningfully. All too often, these groups are underrepresented in parent programs for a variety of reasons, including:

1. Differences in language, culture, and socioeconomic status that serve as both real and perceived barriers to involvement;
2. Employment constraints, childcare constraints, and/or transportation barriers that make participation particularly challenging;
3. The use of educational jargon and complex language that distances parents, including those with limited literacy skills; and
4. Frequent moves that impede the development of long-term, trusting relationships.

Research suggests that schools can overcome these barriers by:

1. Assessing parental interests and needs and engaging families in planning opportunities for participation;
2. Hiring parent coordinators, using parents to reach other parents, and providing parent centers at the school;
3. Translating printed materials into the parents' first language and having interpreters available, as needed, to ensure communication and participation at meetings;
4. Accommodating parents' work schedules as much as possible, providing childcare arrangements and transportation, and/or bringing the school into the community; and
5. Giving parents a valued, equal voice, creating a climate of openness and respect, and providing opportunities for full participation.

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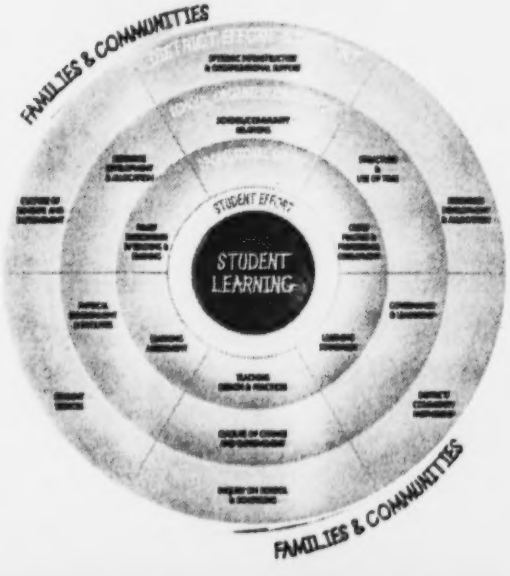
As more and more urban schools move to decentralized models of leadership, the focus of decision-making authority shifts to the building and local school community. Unified educational systems employ human and other resources to provide a range of services in a range of settings to students with different educational needs. "Full service" or "community schools" can bring together multiple service agencies, such as health and mental health, social services, and when necessary, juvenile justice, to meet the needs of all students and their families (Fine, 1994). Schools can also become community centers and resources in other ways such as, offering evening English classes for community members who speak other languages or providing space for health and fitness classes. Schools can even become the location for community celebrations and meetings for neighborhood planning and advocacy activities (Anyon, 1997). Developing a core mission, identifying school community needs, determining resource utilization, monitoring progress towards learning standards, and planning for improvement efforts are all variables that require comprehensive input and shared decision-making by the array of individuals who will be affected both directly and indirectly.

District Effort & Support

The last level of effort included in the Framework involves the capacities and supports available to schools from central district administration policies and practices. Urban schools need the support and leadership that a district administration can provide. The degree to which district supports and networks meet the needs of schools affects the degree of effort that schools can expend to improve. Of course, central district administration work within an even broader set of constraints and opportunities that emerges from state education agencies and federal law, policies, and regulations. It becomes the responsibility of a district administration to understand and mediate the requirements and opportunities from states and governments to support local district efforts to accomplish the outcomes we've discussed so far.



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Managing the state and federal context can be challenging for district administrations. Often state and federal policies conflict, especially in times of change. In addition, people may not understand or narrowly interpret policy and, as a result, blame either state or federal policies as a rationale for lack of transformative action. For example, districts and states may be trying to move away from identifying and sorting students by categorical programs while federal regulations continue to require reporting by label. State teacher licensing requirements can conflict with efforts to move schools toward more group practice among teachers and more inclusive grouping and teaching of students. Sometimes, state and federal regulations can limit a district's flexibility in a variety of ways, including using fiscal and other resources creatively to support school and professional effort. Our focus in the Systemic Change Framework is on schools and their efforts to improve, though we appreciate the importance of the mediating role districts have to manage state and federal opportunities and constraints that can affect schools' efforts to improve.

The role of the urban district, then, in supporting the work of schools, teachers, and students is complex. As systems get larger, layers of management and bureaucracy can mask the districts' role in supporting student learning. The task of educating students with disabilities provides an excellent example of the diverse ways that bureaucracies address this responsibility. In New York City, the public schools serve over 100,000 students with disabilities. Many of these students are in special schools and classrooms removed from opportunities for social and intellectual discourse with their peers who have no ability labels. In Boston, over 13,950 students receive special education services while District of Columbia and Denver each serve over 7,000 students in special education. In Chicago, 79 percent of their 424,454 students are from low-income families and over 20,000 children receive special education services. These numbers are larger than the total number of students in many of our suburban and rural school systems. In one

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city district, a system of center-based programs means that students with severe disabilities are clustered in some schools in disproportionate numbers, while in other schools only those students with mild to moderate disabilities are present and served. Other urban districts have more integrated approaches to supporting learning for students with disabilities.

Such varied approaches to providing special education services create a set of expectations and skill sets on the part of professionals that are difficult to change. Practitioners and schools cannot meet the needs of all students if many of those students, by district policy, are not in their local schools. Nor can they be expected to eagerly accept students who are challenging to teach if they have not had the opportunity to learn the skills and develop a practice perspective that assumes that all students will be present and involved in the curriculum. This final section explores some of the intended and unintended consequences of the structures that urban districts create that, in turn, impact the capacity of schools and practitioners to renew and improve their work with students.

Scarcity of resources, resistance to change, inflexibility of systems, regulatory compliance, and broader societal problems all have a serious impact on the ability of school systems to meet the needs of all its students. The district organizational structure has specific roles and tasks that it can, and must, accomplish far more readily than individual schools. Certainly, the school board and central administration have the responsibility for ensuring that students and families receive consistently high quality educational services regardless of the particular school any individual student attends. Further, the school board, as representatives of the local community, has the responsibility for ensuring that each school reflects local values and beliefs. But as we have said, local perspectives play out within the parameters imposed by state and federal educational policies, laws, and regulations. It is the ongoing implementation of these various agendas that a central administration can carry out while schools and teachers focus on meeting the daily needs of their students and families. The Systemic Change Framework organizes the work of districts around seven tasks: (1) district/community partnerships, (2) a culture of renewal and improvement, (3) systemic infrastructure, (4) resource development and allocation, (5) organizational support, (6) inquiry on schools and schooling, and (7) student services.

District/Community Partnership. Poverty and its attendant consequences are especially pronounced in our nation's urban centers. Data from the Office of Civil Rights indicate that 30 percent of all inner-city students live in poverty, compared to 18 percent of students in non-urban areas. Urban areas also have special risk factors such as violence, neglect, child abuse, substance abuse, poor nutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, and high rates of adolescent pregnancy and childbearing. In most urban areas, almost half of the children who are involved in special education (or who have disabilities and remain unidentified) are also involved in the child welfare systems, have case workers because of abuse and/or neglect, are in foster care or residential placement, and/or are involved in the juvenile justice system. Children and youth who live with violence, abuse, and neglect on a daily basis are more likely to adopt patterns of violence themselves as a function of such repeated exposure. All of these children are at high risk for being jailed, placed in juvenile justice programs, out-of-state residential programs, and other restrictive environments because communities and schools lack the capacity and skill to provide an appropriate array of services. In reviewing the cases of three to four children a week, one caseworker commented that many of these same children have lived in 8 to 10 different places a year. The work of schooling and learning is severely compromised in the face of such a lack of basic physical and psychological safety and security.

These urban environmental risks frequently result in high numbers of students identified as needing special education. Many of these urban youth with disabilities are poor as well. Any one of the contributing factors outlined here would place these students at high risk for future educational failure. The frequent combination of several of these factors places an almost impenetrable barrier between many urban children/youth and success. For example,

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some studies suggest that as many as one-half of students identified as having emotional/behavioral disabilities are victims of physical or sexual abuse. A substantial portion of them has grown up in families involved in alcohol and substance abuse. Nearly 50 percent are from poor, often single-parent homes. The multiple and cumulative needs of poor children with disabilities in the nation's urban areas present tremendous challenges. The work of school districts is too complex and touches too many of the needs of students and families to make it a solitary enterprise.

For many of the same reasons individual schools need to partner with families and communities, districts need to partner with their local judicial, social, recreational, health, and government agencies to ensure that students are able to attend school ready to learn. In addition, they need to reach out to local advocacy agencies and neighborhood organizations to ensure that they are meeting the needs of diverse populations. Often, advocacy organizations can

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help to surface the issues and concerns that a particular faction of the community may have with the school system. Developing and managing local public education campaigns that provide ongoing education for the larger public to learn about and become involved as supporters and participants in public education.

Partnerships for initial and continuing teacher development. Many governmental, regulatory, and professional educational organizations are currently strong proponents of pre-service and professional development approaches that link the mission and goals of school districts and schools of education in sustainable and productive partnerships. Indeed, the work of Linda Darling-Hammond and many others support substantive resourcing of teacher preparation and professional development as the linchpin for better and more durable educational outcomes for all students (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Well-educated and supported teachers have always been the backbone of school reform. Yet, all too often our previous educational reforms have under invested in teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Achieving teacher effectiveness, whether in general or special education, ultimately requires attention to more than the technical and content mastery so familiar to fields of education. There must also be a broadened definition of teacher roles that includes multi-theoretical fluency, creative problem finding and solving, reflective and inquiry-based teaching, self-management, and ongoing professional growth. The dynamic nature of this process suggests that the traditional division of teacher education into preservice and inservice components is no longer viable, if it ever was. As John Goodlad asks, "What comes first, good schools or good teacher education programs? The answer is that both must come together" (Goodlad, 1994).

Well-educated and supported teachers have always been the backbone of school reform.

Partnerships between universities and urban school districts are important strategies for the simultaneous renewal of both organizations (Goodlad, 1994). The arenas of activity within such partnerships address four interrelated and critical goals that (1) substantively support access to and equity in what all students learn (exemplary education), (2) learning for new educators, and (3) learning for experienced educators (teacher preparation and professional development), and (4) new knowledge about teaching and learning (research/inquiry) (Clark, 1994). Some of the activities that can emerge from school/university partnerships include:

1. Services to students, such as mentoring programs, internships, informal education programs, recreational programs, after school programs, tutoring, career education and apprenticeship programs, dropout prevention programs, and medical and social services;
2. Services to educators, such as opportunities for professional development, pre-service programs, school/university partnerships, joint curriculum projects, volunteers, the development of community and school service projects, and participation in the evaluation of student performance; and
3. Services to schools, in the form of participation on school improvement teams, support for district and school management, as well as direct resources and grants for special projects.

Partnerships between universities and urban school districts are important strategies for the simultaneous renewal of both organizations.

Culture of Renewal and Improvement. Through professional development schools, the research values of teacher educators are combined with the primary concern of schools to find solutions to practical problems. Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (1994) note that "practitioner (action) research" is done within an action-oriented setting in which reflection on action is the driving force of the research. Action research helps educators work together on problems pertaining to their own practice, a process that Goodlad (1984) found absent in his observations of 1,016 classrooms. Through action research, university personnel can collaborate with school and district personnel to address difficult problems of practice in educating K-12 students, including problems related to the learning of students with disabilities, and how teacher preparation and professional development support such learning. Several assumptions undergird the creation of a climate for action research:

1. The school, district, and university play important roles in creating a context that encourages educators to approach teaching as innovation.
2. All educators—professors, teacher candidates, teachers, and school and district administrators—share responsibility for creating knowledge.
3. Knowledge produced through action research aims to transform practice.
4. School and district personnel, as well as university personnel, must commit to explore new roles and responsibilities as they collaborate to engage in action research.

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This focus on practitioner-based inquiry is one example of a district-led strategy that signals to the entire organization that renewal and improvement are expected and necessary aspects of a professional organization. To move successfully in this direction, the district needs an overall, explicitly stated, professional development approach that de-emphasizes training and emphasizes research and inquiry. Further, central administration needs to be organized in such a way that data collection and analysis is coordinated and supported so that practitioners and building leadership teams can access information that is "just in time" for their decision-making and school improvement goal setting. Further, accountability data are just one type of data schools need. Schools also need systems of ongoing data collection about families, the lives of their students, and the learning progress that students make so that they can respond to the changing needs of their constituencies. This is a key component of building a culture across the district that values and rewards inquiry, innovation, and improvement.

The district needs an overall, explicitly stated, professional development approach that de-emphasizes training and emphasizes research and inquiry.

Systemic Infrastructure & Organizational Support. The functions of central administration must be organized in such a way that efficiency and individualization are accommodated. In many cases, the systemic infrastructure of districts is rigid and lacks the capacity to personalize and reallocate resources where they are needed. Yet, there are many functions that need to be addressed on daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly cycles that are far better organized and managed at a central level. For instance, teacher recruitment strategies need to be developed and managed at the central administration level. These strategies must involve expanding the number and the diversity of middle and high school students who choose teaching as a career, marketing a teaching career to professionals who are looking to change careers, and working within local district/university partnerships to prepare teachers effectively in the field. It makes little sense for individual schools to create their own processes for doing this work. In this case, since the need for teachers exists throughout a district, centralizing the function is appropriate.

On the other hand, professional development strategies must be closely linked to the individual needs of schools. Some district schools may need to expand their faculty expertise in teaching math, while other schools may need to look at the professional development needs of high school core content teachers around personalized instruction. Individual course offerings may not build the capacity of the schools to improve their performance in these particular ways. But, school-based professional development inquiry groups may build capacity. Districts that have more than one school at the preschool, elementary, and secondary levels can share expertise across buildings. Hence, a systemic infrastructure for professional development is appropriate. But, the infrastructure design needs to focus on meeting the needs of the customers, in this case, the buildings.

Technology can play a valuable role in linking teachers in discussion groups, in creating access to units of study, in tracking student performance across grades, and communicating changes in school and district-level policies. Technology investment is a systemic infrastructure issue but it cannot be developed apart from the input of the individuals who are expected to use it. There are many functions of schools that can make more efficient use of people and financial resources by organizing them at a central level, such as curriculum, transportation, food services, building maintenance, and telecommunications. The development and administration of these services must be accomplished by keeping the user (in this case, the schools and their constituencies, students, faculty and families) at the center of an iterative process of needs assessment, design, implementation, feedback, and redesign.

Student Services. Schools provide a variety of support services to students and families that involve practitioners other than teachers. Many schools use the services of nurses, counselors, school psychologists, reading teachers, special educators, and other specialists. Typically, the budgets that support these functions are managed at the district level. Schools are given a certain number of hours or days per week that they have such specialists available to them. Frequently, the funding that supports these positions comes, not from the general fund, but from federal or state flow through dollars that are targeted for a particular service. Large bureaucracies are created to manage the compliance details that accompany the use of this funding. Hence, a centralized bureaucracy is created to equitably distribute the funding and to ensure that personnel hired to perform these functions are not co-opted at the building level to perform typical instructional functions. Further complicating the picture is that the professionals themselves who are hired to perform these specialized student services need ongoing profes-

More and more, district level administrative structures are moving to multi-disciplinary department structures that focus effort on either articulation areas such as elementary, middle, and senior high school feeder patterns or on preschool, elementary, middle and high school groups that focus on meeting the needs of the buildings.

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sional development and a professional community that values and supports their work. Many practitioners, who fulfill specialized roles within buildings and are often the only individual in their role in the buildings where they work, experience isolation. One of the roles that student services plays is to create this professional community across the district.

Unfortunately, student services divisions are often organized by specializations so that special education, nursing, and school psychology may each develop their own bureaucracies in spite of the fact that the professionals fulfilling these roles may be expected to work together in multi-disciplinary teams, and have enough knowledge of each other's disciplines to address student needs collaboratively. More and more, district-level administrative structures are moving to multi-disciplinary department structures that focus effort on either articulation areas, such as elementary, middle, and senior high school feeder patterns or on preschool, elementary, middle, and high school groups that focus on meeting the needs of the buildings. These newer versions of the central administrative bureaucracies are designed to mirror the functions that are performed in the field.

To build the capacity and sustainability of high quality education in our urban schools requires the following:

1. A deep understanding of the social, political, and learning issues that urban schools face;
2. Leadership to support strong, building organizations that have the capacity to innovate and flex to meet the needs of students and families;
3. A vital professional development support structure that builds capacity through action research and professional development schools;
4. Unified systems of supports that link education, health, and social services;
5. Efficient, rapid, and user friendly information systems that support genuine school improvement processes;
6. A focus on culturally responsive ways of knowing and learning;
7. Active networks that focus work on urban constituencies;
8. Partnerships among existing urban reform efforts;
9. Collaborative and cooperative processes that support families and communities in the design and operation of schools; and
10. An ability to influence policy makers in local and state government.

Summary

In spite of the best efforts of educational policy analysts, local, state, and federal legislation, researchers, and practitioners, the results of public schooling in the United States remains unsatisfactory on a variety of counts. This remains true particularly in our largest and most complex school systems. The limited impact of much school reform has led to a more systemic approach to educational reform. A systems perspective examines the whole organization and the interrelationships between its component parts. The systems approach to change, renewal, and innovation is helpful, not only as we think about the national picture, but as we confront the everyday challenges of our work. The Systemic Change Framework provides an approach to thinking about the work of practitioners, schools, and school district that can help reformers and change agents think about the benefits and counterbalances to innovations and improvements they propose.

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NOTES:

National Institute Leadership Team

Elizabeth Kozleski
Director
National Institute for Urban School Improvement

Dianne Ferguson
Co-Director
National Institute for Urban School Improvement

David Riley
Co-Director
National Institute for Urban School Improvement

Ingrid Draper
Leadership Team Chair
National Institute for Urban School Improvement

James Billy
IL Branch Chief
Rehabilitation Services Administration

Trish Boland
Co-Coordinator & Site Liaison
Denver Public Schools

Kate Burke-Walsh
Site Liaison
District of Columbia Public Schools

Theresa Cooper
Executive Director
Loving Your Disabled Child

Pia Durkin
Team Leader, Unified Student Services
Boston Public Schools

Judy Elliott
Assistant Superintendent, Special Education
Long Beach Unified School District

Leroy Ervin
Chair, National Education Committee
100 Black Men of America, Inc.

Phil Ferguson
E. Desmond Lee Professor of Education
University of Missouri, St. Louis

Anne Gay
Assistant Superintendent of Special Education Services
District of Columbia Public Schools

Charlene Green
Assistant Superintendent, Student Support Services
Clark County School District

Marquita Grenot-Scheyer
Associate Dean
California State University, Long Beach

Liz Healey
Board Member
Pittsburgh Board of Education

Elena Izquierdo
Site Liaison
Socorro Independent School District

Oscar Joseph
Professor
University of Colorado at Denver

Katrina Kelley
Director
Council of Urban Boards of Education

Donna Lehr
Site Liaison
Boston Public Schools

Mbuleio Mzozoyana
Senior Technical Assistance Specialist
Great Lakes Area Regional Resource Center

Hyun-Sook Park
Associate Professor
California State University

James Patton
Professor and Dean of Academic Programs
The College of William & Mary

Stephanie Powers
Assistant Site Liaison
Boston Public Schools

Barbara Ransom
Attorney
Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia

Christine Salisbury
Site Liaison
Chicago Public Schools

Carla Santorno
Area Superintendent
Denver Public Schools

Don Schulte
Superintendent
Socorro Independent School District

Ilene Schwartz
Associate Professor
University of Washington

Elisha Semakula
Research Associate
Colorado State University

Anne Smith
Education Research Analyst
Office of Special Education Programs,
U.S. Department of Education

Charlotte Spinkston
Consultant
CRS Consulting

Cindy Stone
Assistant Site Liaison
Socorro Independent School District

Janell Sueltz
Co-Coordinator
National Institute for Urban School Improvement

Cheryl Utley
Assistant Research Professor
Schiefelbusch Institute of Life Span Studies

Nancy Verderber
Administrative Liaison for Disability Related Issues
Special School District of St. Louis County

Yvonne Williams
Specialized Services Officer
Chicago Public Schools

Julie Woods
Outreach Coordinator
Loving Your Disabled Child

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
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University of Colorado at Denver
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University of Oregon
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Tel: (541) 346-2888
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55 Chapel Street
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TTY: (617) 964-5448

niusi@edc.org
www.edc.org/urban

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